

**Draft  
Environmental Assessment**

**Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area  
Riparian Planting**

**March 25, 2013**



***Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks***

# Draft Environmental Assessment CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) proposes riparian habitat restoration work along the Kootenai River bank within the Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The work would consist of establishing native shrubs and black cottonwood trees along the Kootenai River above the low water mark and extending along the bank below the existing access road. A narrow band of native shrubs and trees will be planted using an approximate 4-foot interval between plants. Along with the cottonwood trees, two species of willow and red osier dogwood will be used. Approximately 600 black cottonwood, 4000 willow, and 2500 dogwood plants or cuttings will be planted.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** State statute 87-1-209 defines the authority and responsibility of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to manage habitats within lands acquired for the purpose of establishing WMAs.

Additionally, 75-7-101 of the Montana Code Annotated provides protection to natural rivers and streambeds and the lands and property immediately adjacent to them to be protected and preserved in order to keep soil erosion and sedimentation to a minimum.

3. **Project name:** Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area Riparian Planting

4. **Anticipated schedule:**  
Estimated planting date: mid to late April  
Estimated completion date: late April to early May  
Current status of project design (% complete): 100%

5. **Location affected by proposed action:**  
Kootenai Falls WMA, Lincoln County (Range 32W, Township 31N). See page 13 for location and project maps.

6. **Project size:** Overall project size is about 5 acres that are riparian plant communities within the Kootenai River floodplain.

<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>	
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>5</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(existing shop area)		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>5</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>
Areas		Other	<u>0</u>

\* Only 5 Acres will be treated, but are listed twice since the proposed action would be classified both riparian and floodplain.

**7. Permits, funding & overlapping jurisdiction:**

- (a) **Permits:** No permits are necessary for the proposed action.
- (b) **Funding:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) through Kootenai Tribe of Idaho - approximately \$10,000.
- (c) **Other overlapping or additional jurisdictional responsibilities:** None

**8. Narrative summary of the proposed action:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) is proposing riparian shrub and tree plantings on five acres of Kootenai River shoreline. Habitat analysis through the Operational Loss Assessment work has documented declines in riparian shrub and tree habitats (and associated wildlife species) within the Kootenai River floodplain caused by the operation of Libby Dam. These proposed plantings are intended to restore some of the riparian plant communities impacted by Libby Dam.

Riparian habitats are rare within the state of Montana, with less than two percent of the area made up of this habitat. The proposed action will provide habitat for a complement of avian, small mammal, and big game species that utilize these rare community types throughout the year.

MFWP will work together with The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (funding through Bonneville Power Administration) to complete five acres of habitat restoration on the Kootenai Falls WMA. Planting sites will be accessed from the existing road through the WMA.

All restoration sites will be monitored for plant survival. Failure rates will be recorded and replanted during the next fall or the following spring.

**10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:**

**Alternative A: No Action**

Implementation of the no-action alternative would allow BPA to allocate the funds dedicated to this project to another project of their choosing. The riparian shrub and tree habitats along the Kootenai River adjacent within the WMA would likely continue to decline in health due to the normal seasonal manipulation of the river's levels by the Libby Dam. Additionally, with the loss of shoreline vegetation, the potential for increased erosion of the WMA's river shoreline may occur.

MFWP may consider a similar riparian vegetation restoration project in the future if funding becomes available.

**Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Riparian shrub and tree planting as described above.

**11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency: None**

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST**

**Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.**

### **A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

1. <b><u>LAND RESOURCES</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b.
c. Destruction, covering, or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition, or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1b. The act of placing rooted plants or plant cuttings into the riverbank deposits through the use of a waterjet or other device would cause some minor disturbance of existing bank material.

1d. Habitat restoration is anticipated to reduce soil erosion along the bank and within proposed action area as new shrubs and trees mature.

2. <b><u>AIR</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13c.)			X			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

2a. Operation of a vehicle to transport equipment and portable electric generator to run a water jet for plantings would release a minor amount of air pollution from those gas-powered engines.

3. <u>WATER</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?			X			3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water-related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

3a. The act of placing rooted plants or plant cuttings into the riverbank deposits through the use of a waterjet or other device would cause some minor disturbance of existing bank material, some of which may enter the river. However, these techniques typically cause little displacement of riverbed materials beyond the immediate area of each hole.

4. <b><u>VEGETATION</u></b>  Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity, or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other:		X				

4a/b. The proposed action will improve plant species diversity, productivity, and abundance, and enhance riparian plant communities in the areas that are planted. Plant survival should be apparent after summer growing season. Survival rates will be documented in the fall of the same planting year.

4c. The proposed action would enhance future nesting potentials for the bald eagle after successful establishment and growth of cottonwoods. Potential nest sites would be created after cottonwood trees reach maturity or decades after planting.

5. <b><u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u></b> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X			5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

5a. A successful proposed action may enhance fish habitat through providing woody material in the future.

5b/c. A successful proposed action will enhance riparian bird communities, provide habitats that support unique avian communities, and establish future habitat for nesting bald eagles.

## B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Operation of a vehicle to transport equipment and portable electric generator to run a water jet for plantings would slightly increase noise levels on the property, but these changes would be minor relative to the existing noise levels along U.S. Highway 2 across the river from the project area.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use, the presence of which would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

There would be no change to the existing uses within the WMA with the implementation of the proposed action.



<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a.)		N/A				

8a. If an electrical generator is used to run the water jet, the generator will be secured in a vehicle to prevent it from tipping and spilling oil or fuel into soils or the river.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

9c. Work crews planting the trees and shrubs would consist of existing employees from MFWP and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b> <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. An effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. An effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. A need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources.		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				

10e. Funding will be from Bonneville Power Administration only.

<b>11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b> <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			X			11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X			11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				

11a/b. The proposed action will improve scenic vistas and enhance the character of the riparian community along the shoreline of the Kootenai River.

11c. The proposed action will improve recreational/tourism use of the river for anglers and rafters by improving the scenic value of the riparian community and increasing the opportunity to view riparian-associated bird species.

<b>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric, historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				12b.
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				12c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				12d.

12a-d. MFWP does not anticipate any impact to cultural or historical resources. The proposed project is currently being reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office, and MFWP would not proceed if they determine otherwise.

## **SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

<b>13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>					
	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				13g.

13g. None required.

No public controversy is expected to be generated by the proposed action.

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

The proposed action is expected to create several scattered areas of new riparian habitat totaling five acres. Successful completion of the project will eventually reestablish mature cottonwood trees along the river bank. The action is expected to enhance human aesthetics, riparian bird and mammal communities, and Kootenai River banks.

A similar project has been designed for Corp of Engineers property upstream of the proposed action. Cumulative effects are expected to be positive enhancement of the Kootenai River corridor through establishment of riparian habitats. Both project areas are limited in area and distribution.

### **PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

#### **1. Public involvement:**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action, and alternative:

- Two public notices in each of these papers: Western News and Montanian
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope, having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

#### **2. Duration of comment period:**

The public comment period will extend for (14) fourteen days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., April 8, 2013, and can be mailed to the address below:

Dwight Bergeron, Wildlife Biologist  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
490 North Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
[dbergeron@mt.gov](mailto:dbergeron@mt.gov)

## **PART V. EA PREPARATION**

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?** No.  
The proposed action is limited in distribution and size. No adverse effects because of the proposed action are anticipated. The proposed action is expected to enhance riparian communities, both plant and animal, and enhance aesthetics of the area.
2. **Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**  
Dwight Bergeron, Wildlife Biologist  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
490 North Meridian Road  
Kalispell, MT 59901
3. **List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:**  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Montana Historic Preservation Office

## Appendix

Figure 1. Project general location showing the area that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes to plant in order to restore native woody vegetation, and the area where a similar project is being planned by the Army Corps of Engineers.

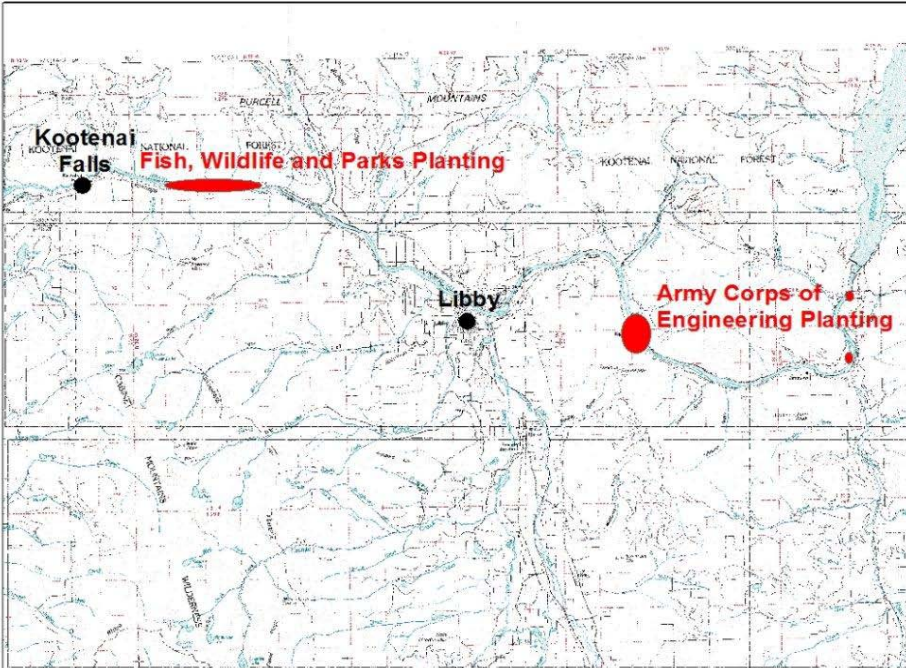


Figure 2. Proposed Action – Six specific locations proposed for planting of native woody species on the Kootenai Falls WMA.

